

KENNEDY ASSAILS REFUGEE PROGRAM

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Cites Staff Report Asserting
'Bureaucratic Roadblocks'
Delay Resettlement

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WASHINGTON, June 8—A Senate investigating team directed by Senator Edward M. Kennedy charged today that the Ford Administration's program for resettling 131,210 Indochinese refugees had turned into a "shambles" because of "failure of leadership."

The report submitted to the Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugees and Escapees accused President Ford's Interagency Task Force on Refugees of creating "bureaucratic roadblocks," delaying resettlement of the bulk of the refugees evacuated in April and May from Cambodia and South Vietnam.

It was written by Dale Stuart de Haan, counsel of the subcommittee, who traveled last month to refugee restaging areas in the Philippines, on Guam and at Camp Pendleton in California.

In a preface, Senator Kennedy called the Administration program "little more than a holding operation," and added

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that it was "without question deficient."

The Massachusetts Democrat said the task force, headed first by L. Dean Brown and later by Julia Vadala Taft, had been "grossly negligent" in its refugee registration procedures.

Inadequate Reimbursement

Further, he accused the Administration of failing to plan adequately for reimbursement of state and local governments that incur costs in aiding the refugees and of insufficient involvement of voluntary agencies in the initial stages of the resettlement effort.

Meanwhile, one of the states, Washington, has developed its own program for resettling refugees that ranges from recruiting them at Camp Pendleton in California to finding them homes, jobs and friends. [Page 17.]

Senator Kennedy spoke of "a dumping policy" on the part of the Administration with regard to the refugees.

He said that from the start the operation "has been characterized by a failure of leadership, poor organization, inadequate planning and belated decision making." He called it "a sloppy laissez-faire approach" to the problem.

To remedy the alleged ills, Senator Kennedy recommended that the interagency task force be transferred out of the State Department's jurisdiction and placed under the authority of the Department of Health, Edu-

cation and Welfare. Mrs. Taft is Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Affairs at H.E.W.

Senator Kennedy also urged the Administration to make more efforts to repatriate Cambodians and Vietnamese to their homelands, to practice a "policy of reconciliation and normalization" with the Communist governments of Indochina, and to give them "humanitarian assistance" instead of "a national policy" of silence.

'Extraordinary Efforts'

Asked to comment on the subcommittee reports, Mrs. Taft, who was appointed by President Ford two weeks ago, said she felt that she could not comment in detail because she had not seen the report. She had been told by the Kennedy staff, she said, that "I can't have it today, and that they would be forwarding it sometime next week."

Mrs. Taft, who was at her desk on the seventh floor of the State Department, where she has worked seven days a week since April 18, said that all she could do at this point was to "defend the extraordinary efforts of the task force staff over the last two months."

"The dedication of the military, Administration officials and civilians of the voluntary agencies has shown remarkable concern for the plight of the refugees," she said.

Mrs. Taft said that of the 31,210 refugees "in the system," 30,340 had been proc-

essed and released for settlement in the United States.

In addition, 3,405 have gone on to other countries to live—almost half to Canada. She said that there were still 56,567 refugees in four American relocation centers; 43,158 at camps on Guam and Wake Island and in Thailand and the Philippines; and 1,045 who were on the way to the continental United States.

"That's pretty impressive, we think," she concluded.

The 52-page report by Mr. de Haan apparently does not take account of extensive hearings by the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration held last month with task force witnesses.

It does not mention, for example, that the subcommittee instructed the Immigration and Naturalization Service to impose strict security checks on the refugees, which have been a major cause of processing delays. Nor does it note that the House group approved and warmly praised the work of the task force.